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ABSTRACT

The Education Amendments Act of 1972 authorized the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to improve postsecondary educational opportunities by providing assistance to educational institutions and agencies for a broad range of reforms and innovations. To implement this authority, the Secretary established the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. The Fund is a governmental, grant-making organization with four distinguishing characteristics: (1) It is comprehensive in scope, covering the entire range of postsecondary education. (2) It is responsive, seeking to yield to external initiative the task of conceiving and developing proposals for basic research. (3) It is risk-taking. The Fund entertains proposals for new and unproven ideas as well as proven ones. The basic purpose of the Fund is to help fulfill national postsecondary educational opportunities. In fulfilling this purpose, the Fund pursues two general goals: diversity and cost-effectiveness. These are achieved primarily through postsecondary education. Many associations, organizations, and agencies are necessary to the realization of these goals. The Fund thus encourages proposals from the entire range of higher and postsecondary educational institutions. (Author/PG)

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE FUND

A. The Fund's Mandate

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
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The Education Amendments Act of 1972 authorizes the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to improve postsecondary educational opportunities by providing assistance to educational institutions and agencies for a broad range of reforms and innovations.*

To implement this authority, the Secretary has established the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, a separate organizational unit within the Department of H.E.W., under the general supervision of the Assistant Secretary for Education. The Fund is administered by a Director and a small professional staff. The Director is responsive to a fifteen-member, Secretarially-appointed Board which is authorized to recommend policy priorities for the Fund, and to review grants and contracts of a specified kind and amount.

The Fund is a governmental, grant-making organization with four distinguishing characteristics:

- It is comprehensive in scope, covering the entire range of postsecondary education.
- It is responsive, seeking to yield to external initiative the task of conceiving and developing proposals to be funded.
- It is action-oriented. While the Fund will entertain proposals for policy-oriented studies and feasibility studies directly related to reform and innovation, it will not fund proposals for basic research.
- It is risk-taking. The Fund will entertain proposals for new and unproven ideas as well as proven ones.

*The specific authority is contained in Title III, Section 404 of the General Education Provisions Act, as amended by the Education Amendments Act of 1972.

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B. General Goals

The basic purpose of the Fund is to help fulfill our national commitment to extend postsecondary educational opportunities. While other Federal programs have extended opportunities for access to postsecondary education, the role of the Fund is to improve the effectiveness and quality of postsecondary education itself.

In fulfilling this purpose, the Fund will pursue two general goals: diversity and cost-effectiveness. These will be achieved primarily through the encouragement of structural, learner-centered improvements throughout postsecondary education.

--Diversity. The population seeking improved postsecondary educational opportunities has undergone profound changes over the past decade. It is larger than before, now including over half of all high school graduates as well as many individuals beyond "college age". It is considerably different than before, as a result of the multiple cultural and technological changes at work in our society and the extension of educational opportunity to individuals from socio-economic groups and circumstances previously under-represented in postsecondary education. To meet the needs of this population, the Fund seeks to expand the total diversity of educational services. This does not mean that the Fund encourages each center of learning to become more diverse--in fact, to increase their effectiveness, most centers of learning might well need to develop unique roles and special educational functions. More particularly, it means that the Fund seeks to encourage the development, implementation, and assessment of effective educational options which are not presently generally available.

--Cost-effectiveness. Increased public expenditures for post-secondary education have generated new demands for accountability and more effective use of resources. Thus, the Fund is interested in encouraging more value for the same dollar, or the same value for fewer dollars. In addition, since educational changes will increasingly necessitate a reallocation of existing resources rather than an expansion of new resources, the Fund will be inclined to financing techniques which encourage such reallocations.

--Structural change. In order to have maximum impact with limited resources, the Fund is particularly interested in improvements which have far-reaching effects. This does not mean that every improvement must have wide applicability, nor that only replicable innovations will be funded. It does mean, however, that the Fund encourages solutions to problems of a general and structural kind, rather than problems which are temporary or of limited significance.

--Learner-centered change. The basic purpose of the Fund is to improve educational opportunities for learners. This does not mean that only those improvements which will directly benefit learners will receive support--many changes designed to improve institutions and agencies which provide instruction or other educational services may have a substantial though indirect impact on learners. It does mean that the Fund will want to know what the probable or eventual impact of each improvement will be on the learning population to be served.

Many associations, organizations, and agencies are necessary to the realization of these goals. The Fund thus encourages proposals from the entire range of higher and postsecondary educational institutions, including profit and non-profit, private, trade, technical, and business schools, as well as from educational organizations and agencies such as student and faculty associations, trustees, state agencies and other governmental organizations, and providers of educational services in settings such as museums, libraries, and workplaces. Proposals are welcome from newly-formed as well as established organizations.

C. Programs

The authorizing legislation for the Fund identifies eight purposes for which grants and contracts may be awarded. These are:

- encouraging the reform, innovation, and improvement of postsecondary education and providing equal educational opportunity for all;
- the creation of institutions and programs involving new paths to career and professional training, and new combinations of academic and experimental learning;
- the establishment of institutions and programs based on the technology of communications;
- the carrying out in postsecondary educational institutions of changes in internal structure and operations designed to clarify institutional priorities and purposes;
- the design and introduction of cost-effective methods of instruction and operation;
- the introduction of institutional reforms designed to expand individual opportunities for entering and re-entering institutions and pursuing programs of study tailored to individual needs;
- the introduction of reforms in graduate education, in the structure of academic professions, and in the recruitment and retention of faculties; and
- the creation of new institutions and programs for examining and awarding credentials to individuals, and the introduction of reforms in current institutional practices related thereto.

To fulfill its basic mission and to achieve these purposes, the Fund administers several distinctive program competitions. Under the comprehensive program competition, applicants are invited to submit proposals related to any or all of the purposes for which the Fund can make awards. Under the special-focus program competition, applicants are invited to submit proposals related to a particular educational need or approach identified as an important and timely "target of opportunity"

for concentrated support. In FY 75 there will be one special focus program: "Education and Certification for Competence."

Under the national projects competition, the Fund itself describes projects of national significance, and invites applicants to qualify for participation in a collaborative activity. In this competition, participants are selected primarily for their potential contribution to the collaboration, based on past accomplishments, and secondarily on proposed activities. In FY 75 there will be three national projects competitions: "Improving Information for Student Choice"; "Alternatives to the Revolving Door: Effective Learning for Low-Achieving Students"; and "Elevating the Importance of Teaching." In all programs, applicants must identify the particular competition they are entering, but are not excluded from applying to more than one program.

This document sets forth guidelines for the third national project: "Elevating the Importance of Teaching." The other national projects, the special focus program, and the comprehensive program are described in separate program announcements which can be obtained at the following address:

Program Announcement
Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary
Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W. - Room 3141
Washington, D.C. 20202